

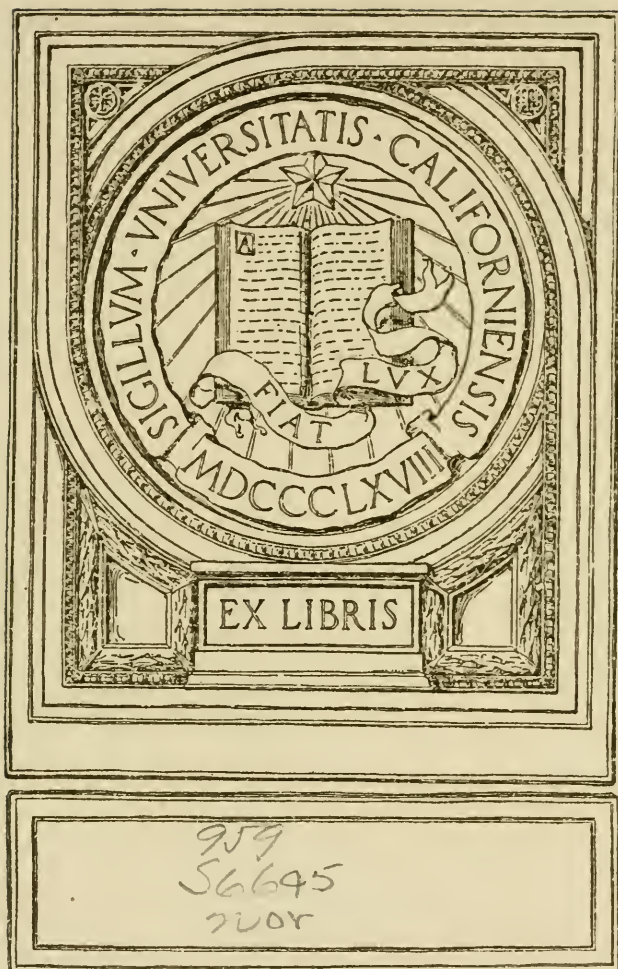
THE NORSE
KING'S
BRIDAL

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E·M·SMITH·DAMPIER



THE NORSE KING'S BRIDAL

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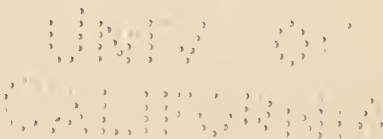
LONDON :: ANDREW MELROSE
3 YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

THE NORSE KING'S BRIDAL

*TRANSLATIONS FROM THE DANISH AND
OLD NORSE, WITH ORIGINAL BALLADS*

BY

E. M. SMITH-DAMPIER



LONDON :: ANDREW MELROSE
3 YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

1912

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TO E. D.
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THE OLD ONE

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IN these translations from the Danish I have adhered strictly to the metres of the original ; this, however, is not the case with those from the Old Norse. The original ballads are not versifications of Northern legends, but, like those in my previous volume, so far as matter goes, pure inventions of my own.

The " Drowning of John Remorsson " is, according to Professor Gründtvig, in treatment, though not in subject, a Danish parallel to the Scottish " Sir Patrick Spens." " Agnes and the Merman " seems to me interesting, as having possibly suggested to Matthew Arnold his " Forsaken Merman."

With regard to " The Awakening of Angantheow " and " The Lay of Thrym," I have little but apologies to offer. No one can be more sensible than myself of their shortcomings. My excuse is, that I could learn

of no other English metrical versions—and we all know *who* rush in where angels fear to tread! If my inadequacies exasperate some better poet than myself to the production of versions nearer to the magnificent originals, they will at least have justified their existence.

October 5, 1911.

CONTENTS

FROM THE OLD NORSE

	PAGE
THE WAKING OF ANGANTHEOW . . .	3
THE LAY OF THRYM	10

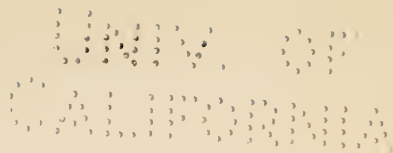
FROM THE DANISH

THE NORSE KING'S BRIDAL	19
THE GIPSY'S BRIDE	23
HAGEN AT THE DANCE	27
THE LOWLY SQUIRE	31
THE DROWNING OF JOHN REMORSSON .	34
SIR DALEBO'S VENGEANCE	39
THE LUCK OF THE LINDEN-TREE . .	45
AGNES AND THE MERMAN	48

ORIGINAL

	PAGE
MORS YANUA VITÆ	55
BALLAD OF THE TURNING TIDE . .	59
BALLAD OF ALL SOULS' EVE . .	66
THE BRIDE'S BRACELET	75
THE WOLF OF IRONWOOD	79
BALLAD OF MIDSUMMER EVE . .	84

FROM THE OLD NORSE



THE WAKING OF ANGANTHEOW

NOTE.—Swafurlami, a king of the seed of Odin, stole the sword *Tyrfsing* (ripper) from the dwarfs who forged it. They laid on it a curse—that it should bring death to its bearer ; that no wound made by it should be healed ; and that three deeds of woe should be wrought by it. Swafurlami is slain by Arngrim, who inherits the sword. Eyfura, his wife, has twelve sons, all of whom become Vikings. Angantheow, the eldest, and his brothers, are eventually all slain near Upsala by Hjalmar, and his brother Arrow-Odd ; but Hjalmar, being wounded by Tyrfsing, has only time to sing his death-song before he dies.

Angantheow's daughter, Herwor (by his wife Tofa) is brought up as a bond-maid, in ignorance of her parentage. When at last she learns it, the war-fury comes upon her ; she arms herself as an Amazon, and goes to Munarvoe in Samsey, in quest of the dwarf-doomed weapon. The following poem concerns her dialogue with her dead father, his yielding up to her of Tyrfsing, and his prophecy of the further doom its possession will bring upon her race.

*THE maid at eve in Munarvoe
Saw the herdsman homeward go.*

Shepherd :

Who walketh alone so late i' the isle ?
Go seek thee shelter and sleep awhile

Herwor :

I seek not shelter to sleep awhile,
For I know not the dwellers in the isle ;
Tell me, thou, what fain I'd know—
Where is the mound called Hiorward's Howe ?

Shepherd :

Mad thou art, that askest thus,
And thy plight is piteous !
Fly we to shelter, far and fast—
The world without is grim and ghast.

Herwor :

I'll give thee a neck-ring of gold so red—
Not thus is the friend of heroes stayed !

Shepherd :

No ring that's wrought of the gold so gay,
No goodly guerdon, my feet shall stay ;
Him I hold but a witless wight
That will walk alone in the grisly night.
Fires are flitting, and grave-mounds gape !
Burns field and fen ! Seek we to 'scape !

Herwor :

Nay, for their fretting no fright I know,
 Tho' all the isle went up in a lowe.
 Nay, it behoves not to fear nor flee
 Tho' ghosts arise. Talk thou with me !

*Far to the forest he fled, afraid
 To hold discourse with the hardy maid ;
 But higher-strung for her dauntless quest,
 Herwor's heart swelled in her breast.*

Herwor :

Angantheow, wake ! the voice is mine,
 Tofa's only child and thine ;
 Give to me the sword of flame
 Forged by dwarfs for Swafurlam !
 Angantheow, Herward, Hiorward, Rann
 Waken, each and every man !
 Waken, waken from your sleep
 'Mid the tree-roots, where ye keep
 Blood-stained spear and sword and shield—
 All the weapons warriors wield.
 Surely, seed of Arngrim bold,
 Dust ye are, and mounds of mould,
 Speechless, if ye let me go,
 Eyfur's sons, in Munarvoe !
 Angantheow, Herward, Hiorward, Rann !
 Be it in your rib-bones' span

6 FROM THE OLD NORSE

As of ants a stinging horde,
If ye give me not the sword !
Ghosts no gear should have in ward !

Angantheow :

Herwor, daughter ! Wherefore thus
Callest curses down on us ?
Mad thou art, distracted maid,
Wilful waking thus the dead !
Surely thou art no mortal wight
That comest thus to the howe at night,
With helm and spear and bright breast-plate,
Ore of the Goths, to the grave-mound's gate !

Herwor :

Men called me a mortal, till thus I yode
To seek thee out in thine abode.
Give me what the dwarfs have wrought—
Hiding it avails thee not.

Angantheow :

Never hand of sire nor kin
Laid me here, the howe within,
But the foeman two that I did not slay—
Tyrfing one of them bears to-day.

THE WAKING OF ANGANTHEOW 7

Herwor :

See now that the truth thou tell !
May the grisly fiends of hell
Tear thee piecemeal from thy grave
If thou hast not there the glaive !
Slow thou art, I tell thee true,
To give thine only child her due !

Angantheow :

Hell-gate is opening—the graves gape wide !
The isle is flaming on every side !
All is ghastly and grim to see—
Back to thy ships, maid ! Turn and flee.

Herwor :

Never a bale that burns by night
Shall put me with its flame to flight.
Never thy daughter's heart shall shrink
Tho' a ghost should stand at the grave-
mound's brink.
I bind ye all with a magic doom
To lie and rot within the tomb !
Hjalmar's bane, from out the howe,
The sharp mail-scather, give me now !

Angantheow :

Under my shoulders lies Hjalmar's bane,
Fenced with a fire that will not wane

No maiden I ken of earthly mould
Will dare such a blade in her hand to hold.

Herwor :

May I have the shining blade
I will hold it, unafraid.
It scares me not, it sinks and dies,
The burning flame, before mine eyes.

Angantheow :

Herwor the brave, art mad, to go
Open-eyed into the lowe !
Rather with the sword shalt hie thee ;
Nothing, maid, can I deny thee.
(*He gives her the sword out of his grave.*)

Herwor :

Son of Vikings, well dost thou
To give me the sword from out the howe ;
Better to me the boon, I say,
Than were I to conquer all Norroway.

Angantheow :

Little, daughter, dost thou know
Wherefore thou rejoicest so !
Fond, thou speakest words of woe.

THE WAKING OF ANGANTHEOW 9

Thou shalt bear a son at length
Who will trust in Tyrfing's strength ;
Heidrek, thus his name shall run,
Richer than all beneath the sun.

Herwor :

I must fare to my steeds of the sea ;
Gay and glad is my heart in me.
Son of a king, I reckon not at all
How my children hereafter strive and brawl !

Angantheow :

Long shalt thou hold and enjoy thy gain ;
But keep in the scabbard Hjalmar's bane.
Touch not the edges, with venom dight,
Worse than a plague to living wight.
Daughter, farewell ! The power and pith
Fain would I endue thee with
Of us twelve men, the life and breath
The sons of Arngrim lost in death !

Herwor :

All is accomplished ; I must not stay.
Hail, ye in the howe ! I will away.

.
'Twixt life and death, methought, I found me,
When the flaming fire was all around me !

THE LAY OF THRYM

WHEN Thor awoke, his wrath was grim
To find his hammer gone from him.
He shook his beard, he tossed his hair,
The Son of Earth sought here and there.

And first of all he spake this word :
“ Listen, Loki ! never was heard
In earth or heaven what now I say—
The Thunderer’s hammer is stolen away ! ”

To Freyja the fair their way they take,
And this is the word that first he spake :
“ Lend me thy feather-fell, I pray,
To seek my hammer, that’s stolen away.”

“ Were it of silver, or were it of gold,
That would I give thee, that should’st thou
hold.”

Loki he flew in the rustling fell
Out of the halls where the Aesir dwell

To Jôtunheim. On a howe sat Thrym,
King o' the giants, a-twisting trim
Golden bands for his hounds of speed,
And smoothing the mane of his trusty steed ;
And this is the word that first he said :
“ What of the Aesir ? What of the Elves ?
Why art thou come to the Giant's door ? ”

“ 'Tis ill with the Aesir, ill with the Elves !
Say, hast thou hidden the hammer of Thor ? ”

“ Yea, I have hidden the hammer of thunder
Eight full fathoms the earth down under ;
No man shall win it in all his life
Until he shall bring me Freyja to wife.”

Loki he flew in the rustling fell
Out of the halls where the Giants dwell,
Until he came to Asgard's bound,
And Thor in the midmost garth he found.
And this is the word that first he said :
“ What tidings, toiling, hast thou won ?
For a man that sits tells a stumbling tale,
And a man that lies, a lying one.”

“ News for my toiling do I bring ;
Thrym has thine hammer, the Giant's king,
No man may win it in all his life
Until he take him Freyja to wife.”

To Freyja the fair their way they take,
And this is the word that first he spake :
“ Bind on thy bridal-veil amain,
For to Jôtunheim we must fare, we twain.”

Wroth was Freyja ! she caught her breath—
The hall of the Aesir shook beneath,
The Brising necklace snapped in threc.
“ Marriage-mad is the name for me
If to Jôtunheim I fare with thee ! ”

All the Aesir to council went,
The mighty ones to parliament,
Gods and goddesses, all in wonder
How to win back the hammer of thunder.

It was Heimdall spake amain,
Whitest of gods, the wily Wane :
“ Now bind on Thor the veil so fair,
The Brising necklace let him wear ;
Hang round him many a clinking key,
Let woman's weeds fall to his knee ;
Jewels broad on his breast shall shine,
And neatly shall ye the topknot twine ! ”

Up spake he, mightiest at need :
“ Call me a coward's name indeed
If ever I wear a woman's weed ! ”

Up spake Loki, Laufey's son :

“Thor, with thy witless words have done !

Soon shall the Giants in Asgard reign

Unless thou win thine hammer again.”

On Thor they bound the veil so fair,

The Brising necklace did he wear ;

They hung him with many a clinking key,

Let women's weeds fall to his knee ;

Jewels broad on his breast did shine,

And neatly did they the topknot twine.

Then Loki, son of Laufey, said :

“I will go with thee as waiting-maid !”

The goats they harness by two and by one—

To the shafts they are shackled, well can
they run !

Valley and hill burst into flame

When Odin's son to the Giants came.

The King o' the Giants did loudly call :

“Up now, Giants ! strew the benches all !

See where the bride they bring adown,

Daughter of Niord, from Noa-town !

“Kine go here with gilded horn,

Oxen black my garth adorn ;

Gold have I and goods galore—

For Freyja alone I long so sore.”

Evening fell on the blithe bridale ;
The Giants sat a-drinking ale.
The greedy spouse of Sif, he ate
Seven salmon, every cate
For the ladies spread, and a goodly steer—
And he drank three tuns, his heart to cheer.

The King o' the Giants, he up and cried :
“ Never was known such a hungry bride !
Ne'er saw I lady so full of greed,
Nor maiden drink so deep of mead ! ”

Sitting apart, the wily maid
Answered what the Giant said :
“ This se'nnight past no meat had she,
So fain she was to come to thee ! ”

He lifted the veil to kiss the bride,
And the hall's full length he sprang aside :
“ Why are her eyes so full of ire ?
Methinks they are darting sparks of fire ! ”

Sitting apart, the wily maid
Answered what the Giant said :
“ This se'nnight past no sleep had she,
So fain she was to come to thee ! ”

The Giant's sister entered in,
Greedy a bridal-gift to win :

“ Give me thy ring of red, red gold,
If thou my love wouldst have and hold ! ”

The King o’ the Giants, he up and cried :
“ Bear in the hammer to hallow the bride !
To the maiden’s knees now Miöllni bring,
And Var shall hallow our hand-fasting.”

Deep in his breast laughed the heart of Thor,
When his hammer he held once more !
He slew the King o’ Giants, Thrym,
And all his race smote after him.
He smote the Giant’s sister old,
She who begged a gift of gold—
For pence, a pound was what she won,
And a hammer-blow for a gay guerdòn !

Thus back to his hammer came Odin’s son !

FROM THE DANISH

THE NORSE KING'S BRIDAL

GLAD was Sir Kaall in the winter,
All up in the northern land ;
Unto the King of Norroway
He's given his daughter's hand.
(Woe was her heart in the winter !)

All for the King of Norroway
They spread the bridal-feast—
But it was young Sir Biörn
The maiden loved the best.

Up spake the King of Norroway
Before the blithe bridàle—
“ Why weeps she, haughty Hyldelil ?
Why is her cheek so pale ? ”

He spake, the King of Norroway,
Unto his pages three—
“ Now bid him come, the young Sir Biörn,
And speak a word to me.”

In came he, young Sir Biörn,
And stood before the board :
“ What wilt thou, King of Norroway,
That thou hast sent me word ? ”

“ Now hearken, young Sir Biörn,
Thou knight so fair and fine !
Say, wilt thou be my seneschal,
And pour my bridal wine ? ”

“ Yea, fain will I be seneschal
All at thy bridal fair,
If I may pour the red, red wine,
Before the bride to bear.”

Sir Biörn poured the mead so brown,
And poured the red, red wine ;
The bride she sat full sorrowful,
And wept for dule and pine.

It was the young Sir Biörn
That leaned across the board,
And whispered to that weeping bride
Full many a wooing word :

“ Dost mind now, haughty Hyldelil,
What passed between us both,
When, sitting in thy maiden's bower,
Thou plightedst me thy troth ? ”

THE NORSE KING'S BRIDAL 21

The bride she sat so sorrowful,
And ne'er a word she said—
But her fair face grew white and wan,
That as a rose was red.

Up spake the King of Norroway
In purple wrapped and vair ;
“ What sayest thou, oh young Sir Biörn,
Unto my bride so fair ?

“ Away, thou young Sir Biörn !
Let be thy cozening tale !
Her face that as a rose was red
Is now grown wan and pale.”

“ There sitt'st thou, King of Norroway,
A-drinking red, red wine !
The lady that thou lovest
Was first true love o' mine !”

“ And if the lady that I love
Has plighted troth to thee,
Then never will I bear her home
To Norroway with me.

“ Now tell me on thy faith and troth,
What I shall ask, my bride !
Wilt reign a queen in Norroway,
Or a dame in Denmark bide ? ”

“Liefer I’d bide a simple dame
A good knight’s name to bear,
Than go with thee to Norroway,
A queenly crown to wear!”

It was the King of Norroway
Smote hand upon the board—
“Ne’er have I known a knight’s daughter
That e’er spake such a word!”

It was the King of Norroway
That laughed, and made right merry—
“And dost thou love him more than me,
With him I trow shalt tarry!”

They rode away, the King his men,
So sadly over the land,
All but the young Sir Biörn
That won the maiden’s hand.

They rode away, the King his men,
So sadly over the ice—
All but the young Sir Biörn,
For he has won the prize!

(Woe was her heart in the winter.)

THE GIPSY'S BRIDE

THERE lived a gentle maiden all by the water
wan ;

She was the fairest maiden that e'er the sun
shone on.

(Oh, oh, ha ! all by the water wan !

She was the fairest maiden that e'er the sun
shone on.)

To her there came a-wooing five princes fair
and tall ;

Yet they were not so beauteous but she denied
'em all.

To her there came a-wooing five counts so fair
and tall ;

Yet they were not so beauteous but she denied
'em all.

To her there came a-wooing five franklins fair
and tall ;

Yet they were not so beauteous but she denied
'em all.

There came a cunning gipsy a-roaming to the
town,
They gave him gold and guerdon to bring her
pride adown.

“ Now lend to me a saddle, a mantle, and a
beast,
And I'll ride a-wooing, as proud as any
priest ! ”

He rode, the cunning gipsy, unto the castle
fair ;
There she stood, the maiden, a-combing of her
hair.

“ Good-morrow, my lady, so fair, and so fine !
Say, wilt thou come to be true-love o'
mine ? ”

“ Away with thee, thou gipsy ! I scorn thy
words so free !
Counts and mighty princes have come a-
wooing me ! ”

“ Good sooth, I am no gipsy, tho' thou biddest
me begone ;
I am the proudest king's son that e'er the
sun shone on.

“I have goodly acres, and fields so fair and
broad ;
I have serving maidens, who shall spread thy
board.

“I have a goodly garden of herbs a-growing
green,
Where thou, my love, shalt wander, out and
in.

“I have three dappled palfreys a-tossing of
their crest,
That thou and I, my sweetheart, may ride
among the best.”

When the wedding now was over, and all the
feasting done,
Then asked the lovely maiden his lands to
look upon.

“Where are thy goodly acres, and where thy
lands so broad ?
And where are all thy serving-maids, for us
shall spread the board ?”

“I have no goodly acres, I have no lands so
broad ;
And never have I eaten at an honest man his
board.

I have no goodly garden of herbs a-growing
green ;

Thro' all men's courts I wander, out and in.

“I have no dappled palfreys, a-tossing of their
crest ;

But only my long hunting-knife, of all my
goods the best ! ”

And she may laugh, the lady, or she may
weep for woe,

But the gipsy she must follow, wherever he
may go.

The lady must turn up her silken sleeves so
gay,

And help that cunning gipsy the slaughtered
beasts to flay

Now must she quit her kirtle and her silken
sark so fair,

For silken sark and kirtle she nevermore
shall wear.

(Oh, oh, ha ! her silken sark so fair !

For silken sark and kirtle she nevermore
shall wear.)

HAGEN AT THE DANCE

THE King sits up in Ribe,
Drinking red wine ;
He's sent to all his Danish knights
Of noble line.

(So daintily danced he, Hagen !)

“ Stand up now, all my meinè,
And knights so bold !
Tread ye for me a merry dance
All on the windy wold.”

Listed him there to dance,
The Danish King ;
With them went haughty Hagen,
The round to sing.

The Queen awoke from slumber,
And laughed so low—
“ Which one of all my maidens
Strikes the harp so ? ”

“Nay, none of thy merry maidens
Strikes the harp-strings ;
That is haughty Hagen,
So sweet that sings.”

“Stand up now, all my ladies !
Wreathe the red rose !
We will fare forth, to see
How the dance goes.”

Forth rode the Queen o’ Danes,
In scarlet clad—
With her went many a dainty dame,
And damsel glad.

Withershins rode the Queen
Around the wold ;
There saw she haughty Hagen,
That knight so bold.

It was haughty Hagen
Spake up so free ;
“Listeth thee now, my gracious dame,
To dance with me ?”

Up stands he, haughty Hagen,
All with the Queen to dance—
Good sooth, they there made merry
With gay pastance.

Up and spake the little maid
In kirtle blue ;
“ Beware, beware ! for traitors’ eyes
Watch all ye do ! ”

“ I heed them not, those traitors—
God grant them dule and pine !—
Would God that haughty Hagen
Might e’er be mine !

“ Dearer to me is Hagen,
In tunic old,
Than e’er is he, the King o’ Danes,
In crown of gold !

“ Dearer to me is Hagen,
Poor and alone,
Than e’er is he, the King o’ Danes,
Upon his throne ! ”

It was the King o’ Danes
Did speak and say :
“ What listeth thus the queen
To dance and play ?

Better to sit in the ladies’ bower
With harp of gold
Than thus to stand by Hagen’s side
On the green wold.”

Up and spake the little maid

In kirtle red ;

“ Hast heard, hast heard, my gracious dame,
What the King said ? ”

“ So newly have I here begun

The merry dance to trace,

The King right well may tarry

A little space ! ”

Up and spake the little lad

In purple weed ;

“ The King o’ Danes is riding home—

Take heed, take heed ! ”

Shame fall on haughty Hagen

And all his lore !

The Queen sits in the ladies’ bower,

And sighs so sore.

(So daintily danced he, Hagen !)

THE LOWLY SQUIRE

SEVEN long years as a lowly squire
I served mine own liege-lord ;
But of his daughter fair to see
They told me never a word.
(And is she glad, then I rejoice.)

Ne'er did I hear a word of her,
Nor see the lovely lass,
Till Easter-day in the morning
When she should go to Mass.

Thus it went from Easter
All unto Whitsuntide ;
The maiden donned her fairest weed
Unto the kirk to ride.

The maiden donned her fairest weed
Unto the kirk to ride ;
I set my saddle on my steed
And went at the maiden's side

There, as I rode by the maiden's side,
Like red gold shone her hair ;
And every man right well might mark
My heart was full of care.

We rode across the lee-land
To the good greenwood amain,
And never did my hand loose hold
Of the maiden's bridle-rein.

“ Hold off, hold off, thou fair young squire,
And do not ride so near !
Well can I see thy foolish heart
Doth hold me all too dear.”

“ I may not eat, I may not drink,
I dwell in dule and pine—
And all the night and every night,
I dream that thou art mine.

“ Good sooth, I am but a poor young squire—
God make me rich and great !
God give me land, as I have love,
To be thy worthy mate ! ”

“ Now dress thee in thy fairest weed,
Speak not to living wight—
For I will pray my father dear,
And he will dub thee knight.

“ Then come into the ladies’ bower,
And stand thou not too near,
That never a living wight may know
How thou dost hold me dear.”

I went into the ladies’ bower,
Right sore afraid was I !
I looked not at my own true love
Lest the serving-maid should spy.

She smiled, the lovely lady,
Beneath her veil so thin ;
“ Now who is he, the stranger squire,
That comes so boldly in ? ”

Now thanks be to the kindly Count,
So leal a lord was he !
He gave away his daughter dear
My beauteous bride to be.
(And is she glad, then I rejoice.)

THE DROWNING OF JOHN REMORSSON

THE good ship lies on the lee-land,
And under her grows the grass,
Oh never so rash a steersman
As Sir John Remorsson was !
(For the sea she taketh so many.)

The King sits up in Ribe
And a letter writeth he ;
He bids his gallant captains
Make ready for the sea.

It was Sir John Remorsson
Put on his armour bright—
“ The man is faithless to his king
That will not sail to-night ! ”

It was Sir John Remorsson
That girt him with his sword—
“ The man who will not sail to-day
Is faithless to his lord !

“ To-night will we make merry
And drink the foaming ale,
And if the favouring weather hold,
To-morrow we'll set sail.”

It was the skipper Hogen
Looked to the sky amain—
“ He that will sail the sea to-day
Will ne'er come home again ! ”

It was Sir John Remorsson
To the haven cried aloud—
“ Up with your sails, ye Danish men,
In the great name of God ! ”

They had not sailed from land a league—
The waves they ran so high—
All sad sat skipper Hogen
With the salt tear in his eye.

They had not sailed from land a league—
The waves they ran so deep—
All sad sat skipper Hogen,
And sorely did he weep.

“ Where is the doughty champion
Yestre'en that talked so gay ?
Let him now take the helm in hand,
For the anchor is reft away.

“Where is the doughty champion
That talked so loud last even ?
Let him now take the helm in hand,
For the sail is rent and riven.

“Now we will cast the lots around,
And bide by heaven’s word ;
Is there a man of evil life,
We’ll heave him overboard.”

And straight they cast the lots around
To see who worked them woe ;
And the lot has fallen on good Sir John
All overboard to go.

“So far, so far from land are we,
With never a priest anear !
But I will make my shrift aloud,
And trust that God will hear.”

It was Sir John Remorsson
Fell on his bended knee,
And there he made his shrift aloud
Before the mainmast tree.

“Full many a wife have I beguiled,
And maidens bright of lee—
But never, ah never, good sooth, I thought
That I should die by sea !

“ Many a maiden have I beguiled,
And many a loving wife—
But never, ah never, good sooth, I thought
That the sea would have my life !

“ The merciful Christ in heaven above
I pray to pity me,
For well I wot my sinful soul
A heavy weird must dree.

“ If ever a one of you comes to land,
And meets my love of yore,
Tell her to wed whene'er she may—
She'll see my face no more.

“ If ever a one of you comes to land
And meets my mother dear,
Tell her I dwell in the king his court
In mirth and goodly cheer ! ”

Seven and seventy there they sailed
Over the billows blue ;
And only five came home again
Of those liege-men tall and true.

Now we will up to the goodly kirk,
High God His grace to pray
All for the soul of good Sir John,
For his corse is cast away.

All out, all out by Boringholm
The tides they run amain,
And there floats many a goodly corse
Will ne'er come home again !

(For the sea she taketh so many.)

SIR DALEBO'S VENGEANCE

SIR Dalebo built him a ship so great,
The king himself had not its mate.
They knew not Sir Dalebo Jonsen.

The king from his window was looking forth
so free ;

“ Whose is the gallant ship a-sailing in the
sea ? ”

“ Now that is Sir Dalebo Jonsen's.”

Up spake the king to his captains bold :
“ Bind him, Sir Dalebo, have him and hold !
Bind him, Sir Dalebo Jonsen ! ”

Up sprang the captains on their steeds of
dapple grey,
And forth they galloped faster than a bird
can fly away—
For they knew not Dalebo Jonsen !

Now they are come to his castle fair and
great,
And there stood his mother a-tarrying by
the gate ;
“ Show us Sir Dalebo Jonsen ! ”

“ I cannot show you Dalebo, I know not
where he be,
For it is seven years and more he rode away
from me—
I can show him not, Dalebo Jonsen.”

The captain pulled off his cap of blue,
A thousand gold-pieces he told so true—
“ Now show us Sir Dalebo Jonsen ! ”

“ To the east o’ the court, in the bower
above,
Sir Dalebo talks with his own true love ;
Ye can find him there, Dalebo Jonsen.”

They knocked at the door with shield and
with spear ;
Up sprang Sir Dalebo : “ Whom have we
here ?
Who are these ? ” said Dalebo Jonsen.

SIR DALEBO'S VENGEANCE 41

He put on his armour all shining and
bright,

Little Kirsten she clasped it, the best that
she might—

“Clasp it hard!” said Dalebo Jonsen.

Sir Dalebo out of the window sprang—

His gold-hilted sword at his girdle rang—

“I come!” said Dalebo Jonsen.

He struck down one, he struck down
two—

“’Tis thus the goodly game should go!

Doth it like ye?” said Dalebo Jonsen.

He struck down three, he struck down
four—

“The game goes better than of yore!

What think ye?” said Dalebo Jonsen.

Sir Dalebo he mounted his steed of dapple-
grey,

And forth he galloped faster than a bird
can fly away,

“Tread softly!” said Dalebo Jonsen.

Sir Dalebo has come to his castle fair and
great,
There stood his mother, a-tarrying by the
gate—

“ Good-morrow ! ” said Dalebo Jonsen.

“ Hearken, dear mother, to what I ask of
thee !

What didst thou with the money my foemen
paid for me ?

I ask it, Sir Dalebo Jonsen.”

“ Ah, Dalebo, ah, Dalebo, and wilt thou work
me woe ?

Never for all the world would I sell thee to
thy foe—

I sold thee not, Dalebo Jonsen.”

He drew his shining sword, and struck her
where she stood,

And all so small he hewed her as the beech-
leaves in the wood—

“ Lie thou there ! ” said Dalebo Jonsen.

Sir Dalebo he mounted his steed of dapple-
grey,

And forth he galloped faster than a bird
that flies away—

For wroth was Sir Dalebo Jonsen.

Sir Dalebo has ridden to the castle fair and
great ;

There stood the King o' Danes, a-tarrying
by the gate.

“ Good greeting ! ” said Dalebo Jonsen.

“ Harken now, Sir Dalebo, and look thou
tell to me !

Where are they, my champions, I sent of
late to thee ?

Tell me that, Sir Dalebo Jonsen ! ”

“ Oh some of them are sick, and some of
them are sore,

And some are lying still, to rise again no
more,

That thou sentest to Dalebo Jonsen.

“ Go then, get thy salt, bid thy scullions
ready be,

If thou wilt salt the flesh that I have carved
for thee !

I rede thee, Sir Dalebo Jonsen.”

“ I pray thee, dear Sir Dalebo, now sheathe
thy shining brand !

For freely will I give thee mine only daughter's
hand !

I pray thee, Sir Dalebo Jonsen ! ”

“What reck I of your wenches, or your
serving-maids so gay ?
I have mine own true sweetheart, that’s
fairer far than they !
I say it, Dalebo Jonsen ! ”

THE LUCK OF THE LINDEN-TREE

OF two true-lovers this tale I tell,
That loved each other long and well.
(We tread the dance so featly.)

Their love it flourished as fair and free
As the branch grows green on the linden-
tree.

The knight to other lands must roam—
The lady, she must bide at home.

“ I’ll plant a linden by thy bower,
Leaves that beareth, and many a flower.

“ And when the linden sheds its leaves,
Then shalt thou know thy true-love grieves.

“ And when the tree its flowers hath shed,
Then shalt thou know thy love is dead.”

When night was done and dawn was grey
The lady looked upon the brae.

“ God bless the tree, so green it grows !
Well fares my love, where’er he goes ! ”

That heard the wily serving-maid ;
Those lovers true hath she betrayed.

The serving-maid, she up and spake :
“ I’ll spill your loves ere dawn shall break ! ”

The serving-maid, so false was she,
She tore the leaves from the linden-tree.

When night was done and dawn was grey
The lady looked upon the brae.

“ The linden-tree hath shed its leaves—
“ Full well I wot my true-love grieves.

“ The linden-tree its flowers hath shed—
I wot full well my love is dead.

“ And is he dead, my heart’s desire,
My bower and all I’ll burn with fire.”

She’s laid a brand her bower unto—
She’s choked herself with the bolster blue.

THE LUCK OF THE LINDEN-TREE 47

When all the bower in a bale did stand
Her love came a-sailing back to land.

When all the bower was ashes and dust
Her love put in to the selfsame coast.

Unto his page he spake, the knight—
“ Whose bower is this that burns so bright ?

“ If my true-love is dead, I say,
God wot, I'll die the self-same day.”

Against a stone he set his hilt,
And there his heart's blood hath he spilt.
(We tread the dance so featly.)

AGNES AND THE MERMAN

AGNES she walked on the cliff so steep ;
Up came a merman out of the deep.

(Ha, ha, ha !

Up came a merman out of the deep.)

“ Hearken now, Agnes, so fair and so fine !
Say, wilt thou come to be true love o’ mine ? ”

“ Yes, good sooth, that will I be—
But how can I dwell in the depths of the
sea ? ”

He has stopped her ears, and stopped her
mouth as well ;
So he bore her down, all in the sea to dwell.

She dwelt with the merman eight years and
more—
Seven fair sons to him she bore.

Agnes she sat by the cradle and sang,
And she heard how the bells of England rang.

Unto the merman she then did say :

“ May I go up to the kirk to pray ? ”

“ Yes, thou shalt go, and pray withal ;

But see thou come back to thy children
small.

“ When thou hast entered the kirkyard fair,
Then shalt thou not let down thy shining
golden hair.

“ And when thou hast entered the door so
wide,

Then sit not down by thy mother's side.

“ When the priest names the Name of dread,
Thou shalt not bow thy head.”

He has stopped her ears, and stopped her
mouth amain ;

So he bore her up to the English strand again.

When she came to the kirkyard fair,
Then she let down her shining golden hair.

And when she entered the door so wide,
She sat her down by her mother's side.

When she heard the Name of dread,
Then she bowed down her head.

“Hearken now, Agnes, to what I ask of thee—
Where hast thou been eight years away from
me?”

“I dwelt in the sea eight years and more;
Seven sons so fair I to the merman bore.”

“Tell me, dear daughter, and fear no blame,
What did he give for thy maiden fame?”

“He gave me a ring of golden sheen—
Never a better one hath the queen.

“Of golden shoon he gave me a pair—
Never a better the queen may wear.

“He gave me a harp of gold so gay,
That I might play upon, to drive my cares
away.”

The merman he made him a path so straight
Up from the strand to the kirkyard gate.

Into the kirk he went, that selfsame day,
And all the holy images, they turned their
heads away.

Like the red, red gold was his shining hair ;
His eyes were full of sorrow and care.

“ Hearken now, Agnes, hearken unto me !
All thy little children are longing after thee.”

“ Let them long as they will, yea, let them
long so sore !
I shall return to them never more.”

“ Think of the big ones, and think of the
small !
Of the baby in the cradle think thou most
of all.”

“ I think not of the big ones, I think not of
the small !
Of the baby in the cradle I'll think no more
at all.”
(Ha, ha, ha !
Of the baby in the cradle I'll think no more
at all.)

ORIGINAL

MORS JANUA VITÆ

It was the outworn clay
That slept in endless peace ;
It was the dead man's sprite,
All in the wan moonlight
An hour before the day,
That mourned, and might not cease.

“ Oh body, oh body of mine,
Deep, deep and soft thy rest !
Thy burning now is cold
In kindly churchyard and mould,
That weights thy wearied eyne
And thine untroubled breast.

“ But I must wander and wail—
Must bear, in wrath and rue,
The burning of quenchless fire—
The frustrate, deep desire
For heights I did not scale,
For deeds I did not do.

“ Oh warm life left behind !
Oh hearts that held me dear !
In my remembered place
Dwells healing and solace,
Among the kinsmen kind
Who decked my sepulchre.”

He sought his father's castle—
But lo ! in bower and hall
The time was come for mirth.
No place, by that glad hearth,
'Mid song and feast and wassail,
For care funereal.

“ Where hushed is earthly din,
And dreams may come and go ;
Where day is drownèd deep
All under the wings of sleep,
There will I enter in,
And there will tell my woe.”

He mixed with the drifting dance
Of dreams that went and came—
But by the sleeper's head
An angel watched the bed ;
His pure and piercing glance
Was like a sword of flame.

“Hence, thou overbold,
Wouldst do the deed forbid!
Unmeet that flesh should hear
Thy tale of woe and fear—
Unmeet that flesh should see
What God with a veil hath hid.”

“Oh eyes that have grown blind!
Oh hearts that have forgot!
Of human love bereft,
One hope to me is left;
The beast’s dumb soul is kind,
Faithful, forsaking not.”

But the petted palfrey neighed
In fear, with starting eye
That searched the shades around—
And shrank the faithful hound,
Bristling, sore afraid,
When he felt the dead draw nigh.

Then the spirit turned and fled,
Wailing, along the blast;
“Torn, torn from life’s warm breast,
In death I find no rest!
Where hide my shameful head?
What refuge find at last?”

Around and about and abroad
He went, while the stars grew dim,
Till 'neath a sombre pine
He saw a wayside shrine,
And heard how Christ the Lord
Spake from the Rood to him.

Yea, once and yet again
Spake that small voice and still :
“ I bear thy sins for thee ;
Canst thou not wait with Me
The slow-wrought fruit of pain,
The long redress of ill ? ”

It was the outworn clay
That slept beneath the sod :
It was the dead man's sprite,
While all the east grew white
In the wide dawn of day,
That waited, praising God.

BALLAD OF THE TURNING TIDE

THE mermaid sat in Sundal Sound,
Combing her lint-white locks ;
She saw the ships sail in and out
Among the rugged rocks.

The mermaid sat in Sundal Sound,
Combing her locks so wet—
“ I’ve laid my love on a mortal man,
And I will have him yet ! ”

It was the maiden Æthelgif
Walked in the blowing meads,
And she marked how the tide came in from
sea,
And whispered among the reeds.

The tide so free came in from sea,
And filled the banks to the brim—
And up sailed Ragnar the rover bold,
And his merry men with him.

Ragnar the rover leapt to land
Before the maiden pale ;
She saw the stars in his haughty helm,
The low moon in his mail.

Sir Ragnar stared on Æthelgif,
And uttered never a sound ;
But in the song of the nightingale
His secret thoughts she found.

And all the tale he might not tell,
The lore of the North and the South,
Was in the look of his eyes, and the kiss
That he pressed on her trembling mouth.

Up and spake the mermaiden,
Beneath the keel did swim :
“ Would Ragnar woo a mortal maid,
The worser woe for him ! ”

The mermaid fell, she spoke a spell,
And said a secret rune
Or ever he wist, and the maid he kissed
Grew faded and faint eftsoon,

As the wavering mist, or ever he wist,
All under the mighty charm—
And like a wraith of wind and breath
She vanished from out his arm.

BALLAD OF THE TURNING TIDE 61

It was the mermaid fair and fell
That sang by the good ship's side
"Ho, ho, for the kiss of the salt sea-spray,
And the toss o' the turning tide!"

Alone in the mead the maiden stood
Like one in a waking dream;
She saw the sail wind in and out
Along the level stream;
Like wan marsh-fire were the shields that
shone
Afar in the faint moonbeam.

"Oh the gulls fly out with the turning tide
And cry across the land,
Each to each in an alien speech
That I fain would understand."

When days were done and years came on,
Her sire did speak and say:
"Let bells be rung and Mass be sung
For a blithesome bridal-day!"

"Oh sweeter to me the wind from sea
That whispers among the reeds,
Than the wooing words of a bridegroom
blithe,
Or the tramp of the festal steeds!"

Up and spake the groom so gay :
 “ Come, pour the red, red wine !
Play up, play up, ye minstrel men,
 To cheer this bride o’ mine !

“ For the evening-star, like a bridal lamp,
 Over the tower doth stand ;
While thin and pale as a wedding-veil
 The mist steals o’er the land.”

She let the golden cup fall down,
 And stared as she were wood ;
“ Oh is it wine ye pour for me,
 Or a beaker of red, red blood ?

“ Like a dirge for the dead is the music
 glad
 That the minstrels play so loud ;
And the mist that’s pale as a bridal-veil
 Is white as a waiting shroud ! ”

Up and spake the mermaiden
 All under the waning moon :
“ Ho, ho for the ship that sails at dawn,
 And sinks ere afternoon !

BALLAD OF THE TURNING TIDE 63

“Ho, ho! for the blood of Ragnar’s breast
On his foeman’s sword is wet!
I laid my love on a mortal man,
And I will have him yet!”

It was Sir Ragnar, the rover bold,
Clung to a floating spar
And drifted in with the turn o’ the tide
Across the harbour-bar.

Oh his look was shent, and his helm was
bent,
And his mail was riven and brast,
And the stream that was so clear before
Ran red where’er he passed.

Red, red his blood ran down the flood—
And, wavering, drowned, and dim,
Like the face of death, from the dark be-
neath,
The cold moon stared at him.

Into the hall Sir Ragnar went—
God wot, his face was pale!
The spray was on his dinted helm,
The red blood on his mail.

“ Turn round, turn round, thou beauteous
bride !

Turn round and look on me !
Say, wilt thou wed a living man,
Or a dead man out o’ the sea ? ”

She took him in her lily-white arms—
She kissed him on the brow—
“ I loved thee well for seven long years,
And well I love thee now ! ”

It was Sir Ragnar laid him down
Dead at the maiden’s feet ;
She’s wrapped him in her bridal veil,
All for a winding-sheet.

Up and spake the shaven priest—
“ Woe worth the paynim foul !
Ye may not lay him in holy ground,
Nor sing for his sinful soul.

“ Cast out his corse to sink or swim
With the toss o’ the turning tide !
Let it ne’er be said that Christian maid
Would be a rover’s bride ! ”

Up and spake the mermaiden—
“ Ho, ho, for his pallid lips !
Ho for the merry fish that swim
Among the sunken ships !

BALLAD OF THE TURNING TIDE 65

“ Ho, ho ! for see where he comes to me
A-floating down so fast !
I laid my love on a mortal man,
And he is mine at last ! ”

BALLAD OF ALL SOULS' EVE

BETWEEN the shrouded fen, and the desolate
dunes of sand
Where the fretting seas gnash white, there
lies a lonely land.

No heights about it couch their grim flanks,
seamed with scars ;
But it hath the wider heaven, and the sky
more full of stars.

Like the verge of the ultimate seas are its
long horizon lines ;
Like the moan of mourning waves the song
of its sombre pines.

The minstrel's out on the moor ; while far
and faint in the wind
Ring the bells of All Souls' Eve in the town
he has left behind.

BALLAD OF ALL SOULS' EVE 67

Beneath the sombre pine he has laid him down
to sleep,
With his harp beside his head ; and night
grows dark and deep.

Softly the wind came sighing, and as it sighed
he heard
In the harp a voice that moaned and mourned
on a woeful word ;

“ Lo, is it naught ? ” said the voice in the
sobbing strings that sighed—
With the wind it wailed and rose, with the
wind it sank and died.

Spell-bound he, Herluin, lay, and watched
like one in a dream,
The moonbeams quiver and dance, and the
long reeds sway in the stream,

Till again, an icy breath, the wind came
whispering,
And stirred his stiffened hair, and sighed
from string to string,

And sobbed into speech ; “ Is it naught,”
the low voice singing said,
“ Is it naught to thee at all that dust of
uncounted dead

“ Is mixed in this lean grey soil ? that on
this moorland lone
The hosts of mighty men lie scattered bone
from bone ?

“ Go search the monkish records, and scarce
shall be descried
Thro’ the dust on an ancient page, the tale
of us who died !

“ Ho, morn of shrieks and slaughter, when
my Danes and I came down,
Driving our foes like flocks, and sacked the
trembling town !—

“ When I struck to my battle-song, and the
swords rang round my head
That I heard not mine own voice, and
knew not that I bled !

“ Woe worth the brand that broke ! Woe
worth the blinding blow !
Woe worth, woe worth the day when I felt
my life-blood flow !

“ I felt my life-blood flow ; I felt my strength
and my wit,
My heart and my hope and my valour flow
drop by drop with it.

BALLAD OF ALL SOULS' EVE 69

“Under these pines I fell, and under these
pines I woke ;
And I saw their stems as a fire, their boughs
as a brooding smoke.

“Woe, woe ! for the fight was over, and all
around was peace,
Save for a moan on the moor, and a long
sigh in the trees,

“And a voice that came and went and wailed
in its wandering—
Deep in my mazèd mind I knew 'twas an evil
thing.

“Oh for the age that I heard, dying alone in
the dark,
That baleful voice, and watched the green
and glimmering spark,

“The eye of the prowling wolf, draw near
and near and near !—
Thou of the stone-built dwelling what dost
thou know of fear ? ”

Sudden, the wind dropped. The voice died
into the night
As the ripples died on the river, and, in
the wan moonlight,

Still grew the wavering rushes, and still
the trembling strings :
Spell-bound lay Herluin, who gazed on all
these things,

And knew not that he saw—while o'er the
moorland's rim,
Lucent, and wan, and lone, the cold moon
stared at him.

Long, long it seemed till the wind, a frozen,
fleeting breath,
Wailed back from far away, "What dost
thou know of Death?"

Murmured the voice, "Give heed, list to the
dark, oh day !
Hot heart, hear thou the dust ! For, as in
fear I lay,

"Cursing my limbs of lead, Death's icy hand
took hold
Of my heart ; the stars went out ; thus,
thus my tale was told !

"I stood, a naked soul ; 'tis strange and
still, I trow,
When the heart has ceased to beat, and the
blood has ceased to flow.

BALLAD OF ALL SOULS' EVE 71

“ Ay, strange to the shuddering soul, when
the heart has ceased to beat,
And it sees the wan corpse lie, unheeding at its
feet !—

“ I hear a rush in the firs, a rush as of hasten-
ing horse—
Like the forelocks of fiery steeds the branches
waver and toss.

“ See, see where Odin's war-maids to choose
the dead draw nigh !
They come with the shout o' the storm along
the scurrying sky.

“ See where their lucent spears, like shafts
of wan moonlight,
Pierce from the height of the heavens, lay
bare the heart of night !

“ See, see where Bifrost Bridge arches from
cloud to cloud,
Built of the gleaming rainbow ! See the
exulting crowd.

“ Of the heroes that shouting cross to feast
in high Valhall,
Where the Maids pour the Æsir-mead to
glad their souls withal !

“ And I—I strained and strove ” (and the
voice grew shrill and thin ;
Like to the shuddering harp was the soul of
Herluin).

“ But the Maids were drifting clouds, and
the Bridge that spanned the skies
Was the glint of the mocking moon on the
tears that filled mine eyes.

“ Dead, they are dead, the gods in whom we
have put our trust ;
The hopes of heroes’ hearts are ashes and
dross and dust.

“ We have seen our flesh the sport of the
crows and the creeping things—
We have seen the moss and the lichen grow
over the bones of kings—

“ The firs from us have fed their withen
boughs and thin
Our burning blood springs up in the cold
green sap o’ the whin—

“ A whirl of withered leaves in the desolate
land of death,
Such are our haughty hosts, and our foes
are wind and breath.

BALLAD OF ALL SOULS' EVE 73

“ I found in thy harp a voice ; and, after
uncounted years,
As a man to a man I spoke, and thou couldst
not close thine ears.

“ Yea, now thine ears are opened, for I saw
thy soul as a fire
Aflame in the wastes of the night, the depth
of my vain desire.

“ As a moth to the torch's flame, as to the
moon the tide,
Drawn by thy tameless spirit, drawn by thy
passion and pride,

“ Storming the gates of Sense, as the cry of
the chords outbroke,
Out of the deep I called, and unto the deep
I spoke ! ”

Darkness dissolved ; the earth stole back to
sight ; and shrill
A cock crew far away ; like tears the dew lay
chill ;

And Herluin raised his head, and saw the
pallid gleam
Stand in the face of the East above the shim-
mering stream,

While o'er him as he lay, half-mazed in a
magic sweven,
The black pine-branches hovered like torn
clouds hung in heaven.

Day stood upon the moor ; and the wailing
voice, withdrawn,
Sighed o'er the sobbing harp-strings, and
died in the wind of dawn.

THE BRIDE'S BRACELET

THE King went forth at dawning
To watch the turn of the tide :
“ Be still, my soul, be still !
To-day shall bring the bride.

“ Sea-gull, oh sea-gull,
Stay thy shifting wings !
Hast seen the ship a-sailing,
My love that brings ?

“ The ship with sails of scarlet
Where threads of gold entwine—
With maids and merry minstrels,
And gifts of mine,

“ A veil for her head, and a girdle,
And a bracelet all of gold,
Wrought by a cunning craftsman
With labours manifold.”

The King went forth at even
To watch the silver web
Woven by wavering moonbeams
Over the tide at ebb.

“ Oh nights are short in summer !
She will come to me soon ;
To-morrow at dawn of day
Or at height of noon.”

Oh the sea grew hoary and grey
At the turn of the year ;
The fire of the whin was faded,
The heather was brown and sere.

All the air was filled
With the moan of the mourning main ;
And the ship with sails of scarlet
Came not home again.

The King went forth in the night—
For care he could not sleep—
Down the perilous pathway—
Down to the edge of the deep.

There was never a star to shine ;
Nor sea from shore he wist,
Till he felt around his feet
The chill of the foam that hissed.

There was never a star in the skies,
And the face of the deep was dim—
Yet he saw a wavering wanness
Like the cold moon sink and swim.

Yea, as in the heart of the billow
Quivers the wan sea-flame,
Drifting in the darkness
The mermaiden came.

And on the long sea-swell,
Like to a foam-wreath pale,
Among her locks a-floating
He saw a costly veil,

That a queen might wear to wed in—
And on her arm so cold
He saw a gallant bracelet
All of the gleaming gold,
Wrought by a cunning craftsman
With labours manifold.

Then the eyes of the King were darkened,
And his shuddering soul went down
Like a stone in the dark o' the deeps
Where shipwrecked sailors drown.

The mermaid shimmering sank
Like a moon that clouds eclipse—
And the spray of the salt sea mingled
With the salt tears on his lips.

The King goes forth at even
By the sea-side ;
He hears in the long dark caverns
The sobbing of the tide.

Pale is the face of the King
Like one in a deadly swoon ;
Wan o'er the waste of waters
Glimmers the waning moon.

THE WOLF OF IRONWOOD

Ho for the white of the withered bough
And the red of the wrinkled leaf !
Sir Arngrim sits in Ironwood,
And his heart is filled with grief.

The sun sinks down on Ironwood
Blood-red behind the trees ;
Sir Arngrim stares upon the sword
That lies across his knees.

“ Oh my father died a death of blood,
And my mother of wasting woe ;
And their spirits dwell in the rocky fell
Where the trees of Ironwood grow.

“ And still the guilt of the life-blood spilt
Doth unavenged remain ;
And in the red of the wrinkled leaf
I read my father's pain.

“ Oh the kings were three, sailed o’er the sea
To work us havoc and harm ;
And I see in the white of the wizened bough
My mother’s beckoning arm.”

Sir Arngrim stood with the sea beneath
And the rocky fell behind,
And there he saw three gallant ships
That sailed before the wind.

“ Oh red of hand, they come to land
With a host and a mighty horde !
And how shall I wreak my father’s death
With the power of a single sword ? ”

When the writhen shadows in Ironwood
Grew long, and the fading rim
Of the sun sank low behind the fell,
The witch-wife came to him.

“ Now hearken to me, thou goodly knight !
And, if thou grant me grace,
I’ll work a spell shall serve thee well
For love of thy fair young face.

“ Oh a maid am I from dawn till dusk—
But by night of a magic rune,
And a weird of woe, a wolf I go
O’ nights beneath the moon,

“Thou shalt slay three hosts in Ironwood
That the wolf her fill may feed—
Then as lover true, when the fight is done,
Shalt pay the maiden’s meed.”

Sir Arngrim looked upon the witch,
And her face was fair to see.
He’s plighted her troth on his knightly oath
And sealed it with kisses three.

It was the first o’ the hosts came on
With the rush of a roaring gale—
But they might not stir the single sword
That bit through bone and mail.

Oh half o’ the host at eve were slain,
And half o’ the host were fled ;
And all night long in Ironwood
The wolf howled o’er the dead.

It was the second host came on
As levin leaps from the sky ;
But they might not quell the witch’s spell
And the sword of grammarye.

Oh half o’ the host at eve were fled,
And half in their blood lay still ;
And all night long in Ironwood
The wolf did feed her fill.

It was the third o' the hosts came on
Like the waves of a winter sea ;
But they broke on the sword as billows
break
Where the hidden skerries be.

Oh half o' the host at eve were slain,
And half were fled away ;
And like the dead, among the dead,
In a swoon Sir Arngrim lay.

The moon shone down on Ironwood
Above the trees so tall ;
And lo ! the red and wrinkled leaves
Upon his face did fall.

And lo ! the shade of the withered bough
Across his face lay dim,
And the wolf she leapt, and seized, and
tore
The warrior limb from limb.

Ho ho for the red of the wrinkled leaf !
His spirit has gone to dwell
With the grimly ghosts of the ancient
hosts
That haunt the rocky fell !

THE WOLF OF IRONWOOD 83

Ho ho for the white of the withered bough !
The witch she wails full sore ;
And Ironwood, for that deed of blood,
Is accursèd evermore !

BALLAD OF MIDSUMMER EVE

THE throstle he roused him at fall of eve
And said to the owlet grey,
“ Lo, brother, look through the dusky wood
And tell who comes this way.”

The owlet stirred on the swaying bough
Of the slender birchen-tree :
“ And seest thou not the minstrel-wight
A-roaming along the lea ? ”

“ And what of the voice that comes with him,
The voice that sighs and sings ? ”
“ Oh, that’s the sound of the harp he bears
As the wind blows over the strings.”

“ And is it for love of a fair young maid
That his cheek is pale and wan ? ”
“ Ay, a maid I wis, but never a kiss
Will she lay on the lips of man.

BALLAD OF MIDSUMMER EVE 85

“ He must sit all day at the ale-house door
Amid the talk o’ the town,
With a merry stave for knight and knave
And a jest for the staring clown.

“ But when bells are rung and songs are sung
And all men lie and sleep,
The merry minstrel forth must fare
His secret tryst to keep.

“ The merry minstrel forth must fare,
All in the twilight dim,
To woo the queen o’ Fairyland
That’s cast a spell on him.

“ Oh her form’s the form of the lily-white
birch
That sways to the breeze, and her breath
Is the scent o’ the thyme and the blowing furze
And the honey that’s stored in the heath.

“ And her dark eyes’ beam is the wavering
gleam
On the water that’s wan to see
When the evening star hangs faint and far
Above the birchen-tree.

“ And wouldst thou learn her secret lore,
Go, read the magic rune
That the writhen boughs of the thorn-tree
trace
O’ nights across the moon.”

“ And what’s the guerdon he shall gain
By grace of the Fairy-queen ? ”
“ Oh, a hope that’s lost and a love that’s
crossed,
And tears and toil and tene,

“ And feet astray in the paths of day,
And a song that cannot be sung—
For elfin music is wind and breath
When the matin-bell is rung.

“ For the cock crows shrill, and the dew lies
chill,
And the faint stars die, withdrawn ;
And elfin gold is withered leaves
At the coming of the dawn.”



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